

# The Diplomatic Ask

Enabling Force Design 2030

by Col Jonathan Haynes

As stated by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Force Design 2030 (FD2030)* envisions expeditionary advance bases with stand-in forces capable of confronting opposing naval forces with “an array of low signature, affordable, and risk-worthy platforms and payloads.”<sup>1</sup> The Center for Strategic and International Studies deduced from *FD2030* that

small Marine forces would deploy around the islands of the first island chain and the South China Sea, each element having the ability to contest the surrounding air and naval space using anti-air and anti-ship missiles.<sup>2</sup>

Based on these descriptions, what would be the role of the State Department and U.S. diplomacy in the implementation of *FD2030*? This article considers the questions that U.S. diplomats in the region would need to ask to accomplish the goals of *FD2030*.

First, U.S. diplomats must engage our close allies and partners like Japan, Australia, and India, which, together with the United States, make up the informal Quadrilateral Security Agreement, or “Quad,” grouping. The United States reaffirmed this diplomatic relationship following the 2017 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Manila.<sup>3</sup> The State Department should begin by sending a message, coordinated with the DOD and the National Security Council, instructing Embassies Canberra, New Delhi, and Tokyo to approach the host government at the political leadership-level and ask for three key things. First, *FD2030* will need facilities throughout the region. How can our Quad partners assist in obtaining the facilities needed to support *FD2030*? Second, these facilities and the personnel engaged on those facilities will need logistical sup-

**>Col Haynes is currently a team leader for the MSTP IMA DET. This article was initially part of course requirements for the Army War College where Col Haynes graduated in July 2020.**

port. How can our Quad partners assist with logistical support? Third, *FD2030* will need to partner with other nations in Southeast Asia. We will need the help of our Quad partners to identify those nations and to assist us in working with them in such a way that will benefit them but will also enable the requirements of *FD2030*.

Developing a diplomatic approach to enable *FD2030* opens up new opportunities in the region. *FD2030* provides

oritization of projects could shift from Futenma and Guam to other projects in the region.<sup>4</sup>

*FD2030* also provides an opportunity to expand our partnership with the other Quad nations. It provides an opportunity with Australia to review basing options in Darwin and to expand joint exercises in the region. U.S. diplomats could ask their counterparts in Australia about the possibility of expanded basing of Marine Forces in Darwin. Additional dialogue with Australian diplomats should consider increasing the number and extent of joint, multinational exercises in the region. *FD2030* also provides an opportunity to develop our partnership with India. U.S. diplomats could ask their counterparts in India about the potential of logistical support for the introduction

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an opportunity to deepen our partnership with Japan on infrastructure and engagement in the region. U.S. diplomats could ask their counterparts in Japan to advise and assist in building the infrastructure to deploy small Marine forces around the islands of the first island chain and the South China Sea. This will require delicate negotiation with nations in the region but will also open up economic opportunities for the development of this new infrastructure. This could provide alternatives to advance the long-term goal of redistributing Marine forces from Okinawa. Pri-

of small Marine forces around the first island chain and the South China Sea. In these ways, *FD2030* would open up new avenues of engagement with our Quad partners.

Diplomatically, the United States would certainly want to consult with ASEAN regarding the concepts of *FD2030*. To respect the principle of ASEAN centrality, U.S. diplomats should begin by talking with the ASEAN chair. The 2020 chair, Vietnam, would likely be friendly and receptive while cautious not to alienate China.<sup>5</sup> Although Vietnam has tried to work

jointly with China on coast guard patrolling and maritime policy, China's continued harassment of Vietnamese fishermen and drilling interests opens up opportunities for agreements with more cooperative partners.<sup>6</sup> *FD2030* could provide the diplomatic catalyst for initiating conversations about new partnerships with Vietnam and other nations (e.g. Malaysia and the Philippines) that are growing impatient with China's violations of territorial sovereignty.<sup>7</sup> Given these circumstances, U.S. diplomats could propose expanded bilateral or multilateral partnerships with ASEAN countries in maritime domain awareness.

As recommended in the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) "Contested Spaces" report, the United States and Japan could invite teams of engineers and entrepreneurs from across Southeast Asia to participate in a contest to develop innovative and low-cost solutions to the region's maritime domain awareness needs. Teams could compete to develop applications that would enable civilian fishing vessels to share information on a common platform that could pool data from commercial vessels and layer in cell phone pictures and text messages.<sup>8</sup> Implementation of *FD2030* provides a catalyst for initiating U.S. diplomatic discussions first with the ASEAN chair, Vietnam, but then with other willing partners in the region to establish increased maritime domain awareness.

As suggested by Patrick Cronin of the Hudson Institute, the distribution of forces around the region is a way to "maintain and expand access through low-footprint efforts designed to help address local problems, from humanitarian disasters to illegal fishing," which, he said, should go along with modernizing early-warning systems in the region.<sup>9</sup> Addressing these issues within the region could be used to build upon current military exercises, which would also support the implementation of *FD2030*. The vision of *FD2030* could be integrated into these exercises by employing small Marine forces with the ability to contest the surrounding air and naval space using anti-air and anti-ship missiles around the islands of the

first island chain and the South China Sea. The employment of these forces could be exercised to increase maritime defense against counter-piracy, counter-terrorism, or other maritime concerns of ASEAN members—Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and all those with an interest in increasing the efficacy of maritime monitoring in the region.

Looking beyond maritime security to economic growth in the region, U.S. diplomats could ask their counterparts how the United States could collaborate in vocational and technical training to develop logistical support networks in

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the region. Logistics support will be a crucial element of *FD2030*. Partnering in education would be an avenue of long-term diplomatic engagement in support of *FD2030*. The CNAS "Contested Spaces" report remarked that countries in the region view human-capital development, especially vocational and technical training, as "fundamental to becoming innovation hubs in their own right."<sup>10</sup> Japan's Kosen National Institute of Technology has partnered with Thailand's universities to develop training for programmers.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, partnering in vocational and technical education could develop regional partnerships to provide the training in logistics that will be needed for *FD2030*.

*FD2030* is an ambitious and innovative concept that could propel the Marine Corps into a new era of support to our nation's security. Partnering with the diplomatic community will be an essential component of the success of this initiative. The questions proposed in this article provide a starting point for the diplomatic ask for our Quad

partners as well as the ASEAN nations that are integrally connected to the vision of *FD2030*.

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#### **Notes**

1. Gen David H. Berger, *Force Design 2030*, (Washington, DC: March 2020).

2. Mark F. Cancian, "The Marine Corps' Radical Shift toward China," (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2020), available at <https://www.csis.org>.

3. Ankit Panda, "U.S., Japan, India, and Australia Hold Working-Level Quadrilateral Meeting on Regional Cooperation," *The Diplomat*, (November 2017), available at <https://thediplomat.com>.

4. Mark F. Cancian, "U.S. Military Forces in FY 2020: Marine Corps," (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 2019).

5. Derek Grossman, "Reviewing Vietnam's 'Struggle' Options in the South China Sea," *The Diplomat*, (May 2020), available at <https://thediplomat.com>.

6. Ibid.

7. Drake Long, "Three ASEAN States Push Back on Beijing in South China Sea," *Radio Free Asia*, (April 2020), available at <https://www.rfa.org>.

8. Patrick M. Cronin, Abigail Grace, Daniel Kliman, and Kristine Lee, "Contested Spaces: A Renewed Approach to Southeast Asia," (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, March 2019), available at <https://www.cnas.org>.

9. Paul McLeary, "SecDef & Marines Want To Disperse Across Pacific, But It's Hard," *Breaking Defense*, (August 2019), available at <https://breakingdefense.com>.

10. "Contested Spaces."

11. Yo Tanaka, Akihide Anzai, and Marimi Kishimoto, "Thailand and Mongolia Embracing Japanese 'Kosen' Schools," *Nikkei Asian Review*, (September 2017), available at <https://asia.nikkei.com>.

